

Testimony of Sarah Woodbury, Vice President of Policy and Advocacy, Defend Our Health
In Opposition of LD 1887 “Resolve, To Improve Air Quality and Ventilation in Newly Constructed
Schools”

Before the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee
May 9, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee. My name is Sarah Woodbury. I am the vice president of policy and advocacy for Defend Our Health. Defend Our Health’s mission is the make sure that everyone has equal access to safe food and drinking water, healthy homes and products that are toxic-free and climate friendly. I am here to testify in opposition to LD 1887 “Resolve, To Improve Air Quality and Ventilation in Newly Constructed Schools.”

According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, American students spend about 8,884 hours in school from kindergarten to the 8th grade. This adds up to over a year of their lives. This isn’t including the time spent in classrooms during high school¹. Children, regardless of the school they are attending, should expect to be able to breathe clean air. LD 1887 would require the Department of Education to amend the rules regarding air ventilation so that they only apply to new schools.

If a school does not have correct ventilation, it can have adverse impacts on children’s health in both the short and long term. Those impacts can be everything from poor concentration and headaches to asthma and COPD symptoms². We should do everything we can to protect all students from these very real dangers. More than 500 schools in Maine were built before 1990 and 243 of those were built before 1963³. That is a lot of Maine students left with poor ventilation if only new schools are required to meet health protective ventilation standards.

We understand that the current rules are confusing and hard for any Maine school to implement. Instead of making the current rules apply to only new buildings, instead it makes sense to amend this bill to require that the rules be clarified to identify which standards apply to which

¹ Sparks, S. D. (2020, December 1). *U.S. teachers and students are tops for time spent in school*. Education Week.
<https://www.edweek.org/leadership/u-s-teachers-and-students-are-tops-for-time-spent-in-school/2019/09>

² *How your school’s Indoor Air Quality Affects Health and learning*. American Lung Association. (n.d.).
<https://www.lung.org/blog/schools-indoor-air-quality-faqs>

³ Board, R. (2024, October 4). *Mills creates committee to study Maine’s School Construction Funding*. Press Herald.
<https://www.pressherald.com/2024/10/04/gov-mills-creates-committee-to-study-maines-funding-school-construction-fund/>



schools. We urge this committee to vote “ought not to pass” on the current version of LD 1887 and instead amend it to clarify the rules and apply them to all schools.